

Jim Henson's™  
**THE STORYTELLER**™  
*Tale Three of Four*  
*Witches*



ARCHAIA™

MATTHEW DOW SMITH



*the*  
**HANTOM ISLE**

Written & Illustrated by  
*Matthew Dow Smith*

Cover by  
*Matthew Dow Smith*

Designer  
*Tillian Crab*

Assistant Editor  
*Cameron Chittock*

Editor  
*Rebecca Taylor*

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*Jim Henson*  
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WHAT  
IS IT ABOUT  
A NICE FIRE  
?

THE  
CRACKLE  
OF FLAMES  
...

THE  
SWEET  
SMELL OF  
BURNING  
WOOD  
...

THE  
WARM GLOW  
FILLING THE  
ROOM.

SOMETHING  
ABOUT IT JUST  
BRINGS OUT THE  
STORYTELLER IN  
ALL OF US.

IF  
YOU SAY  
SO.

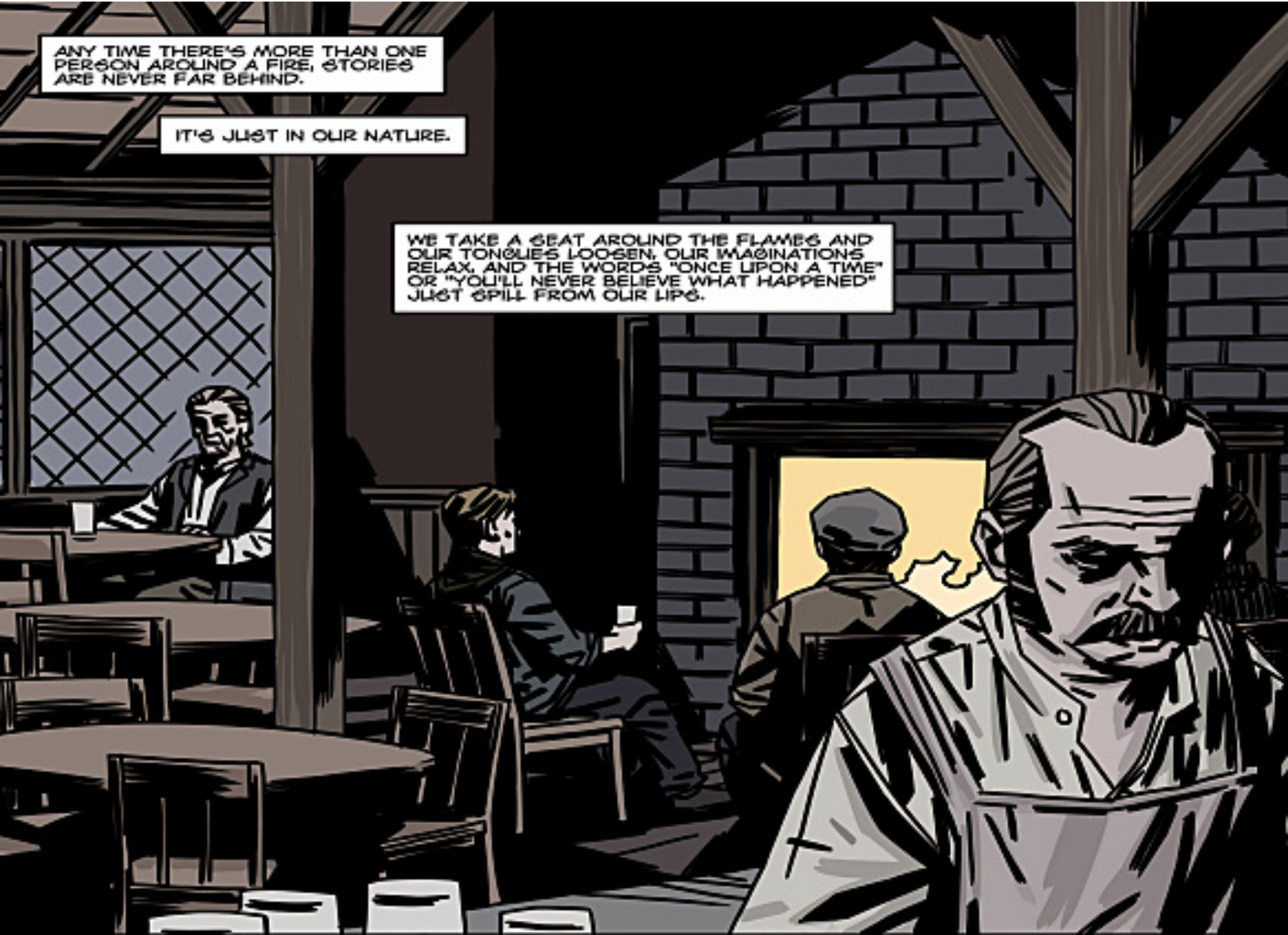
OH,  
I DO.

I  
DO.

ANY TIME THERE'S MORE THAN ONE PERSON AROUND A FIRE, STORIES ARE NEVER FAR BEHIND.

IT'S JUST IN OUR NATURE.

WE TAKE A SEAT AROUND THE FLAMES AND OUR TONGUES LOOSEN, OUR IMAGINATIONS RELAX, AND THE WORDS "ONCE UPON A TIME" OR "YOU'LL NEVER BELIEVE WHAT HAPPENED" JUST SPILL FROM OUR LIPS.



TALL TALES, FISH STORIES,  
AN EPIC POEM OR TWO...

YOU'LL HEAR THEM ALL  
AROUND A ROARING FIRE.



AND SOME OF THEM  
WILL EVEN BE TRUE.

SO ...

LIKE  
STORIES,  
DO WE  
?

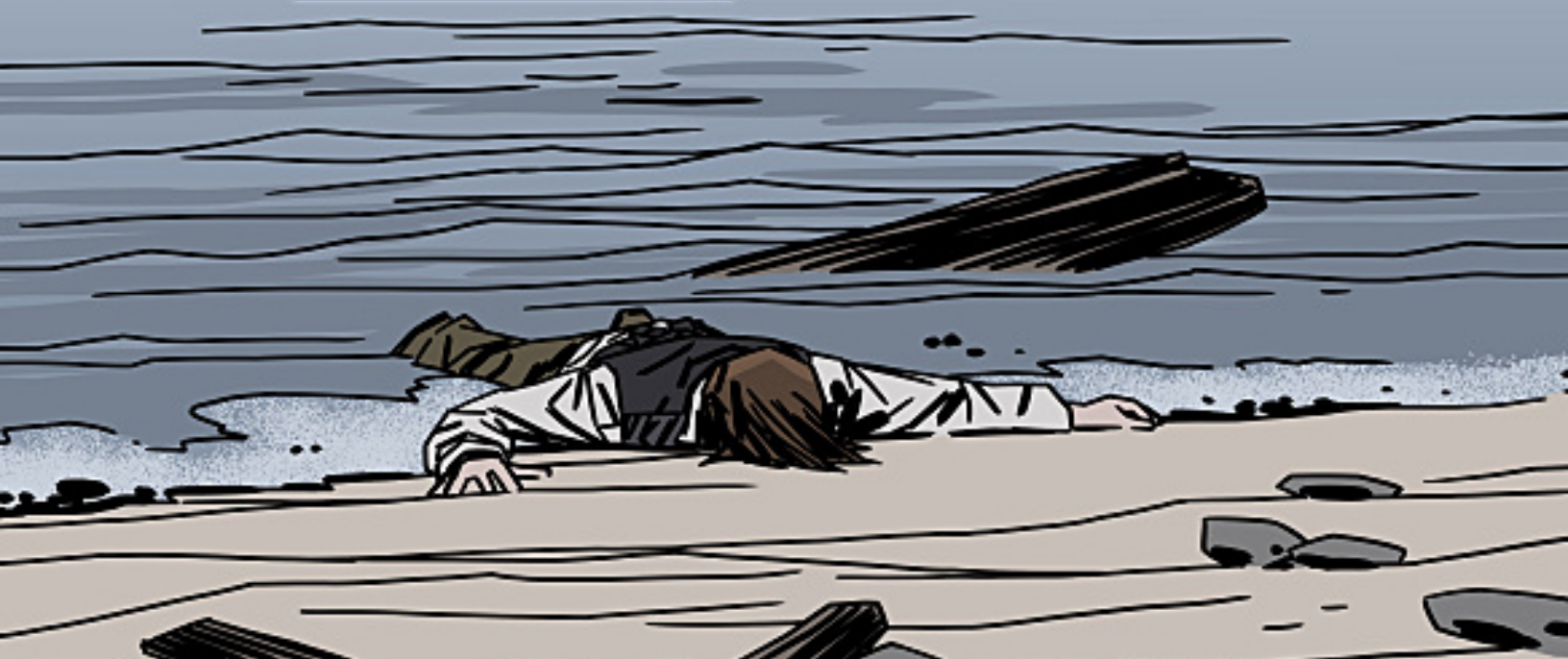




WHEN HE HIT THE ICY WATERS, OUR YOUNG FRIEND THOUGHT HIS STORY WAS OVER, BUT THAT'S NOT HOW THE TALE WAS MEANT TO END.

INSTEAD OF WAKING UP AT THE PEARLY GATES, HE FOUND HIMSELF ON A BEACH, WASHED UP LIKE SO MUCH DRIFTWOOD.

A BEACH ON AN ISLAND WHERE NO ISLAND SHOULD BE.



IT WAS A MYSTERY, BUT BETTER THAT THAN TO FACE SAINT PETER.

HEAVEN TAKES A DIM VIEW OF STRETCHING THE TRUTH.



AND THE GREAT STORYTELLERS HAVE ONLY A PASSING RELATIONSHIP WITH HONESTY.

EVERYONE KNOWS THAT A WELL-PLACED EXAGGERATION CAN ADD SEASONING TO THE DULLEST OF EVENTS...



AND A TRUE STORYTELLER KNOWS THAT *EVERY* TALE BENEFITS FROM A TOUCH OF SPICE.

ESPECIALLY THE TRUE ONES.



NO MATTER HOW EXTRAORDINARY THE TRUTH MIGHT BE.

AND SO IT IS A GREAT IRONY THAT  
SUCH A FINE STORYTELLER...

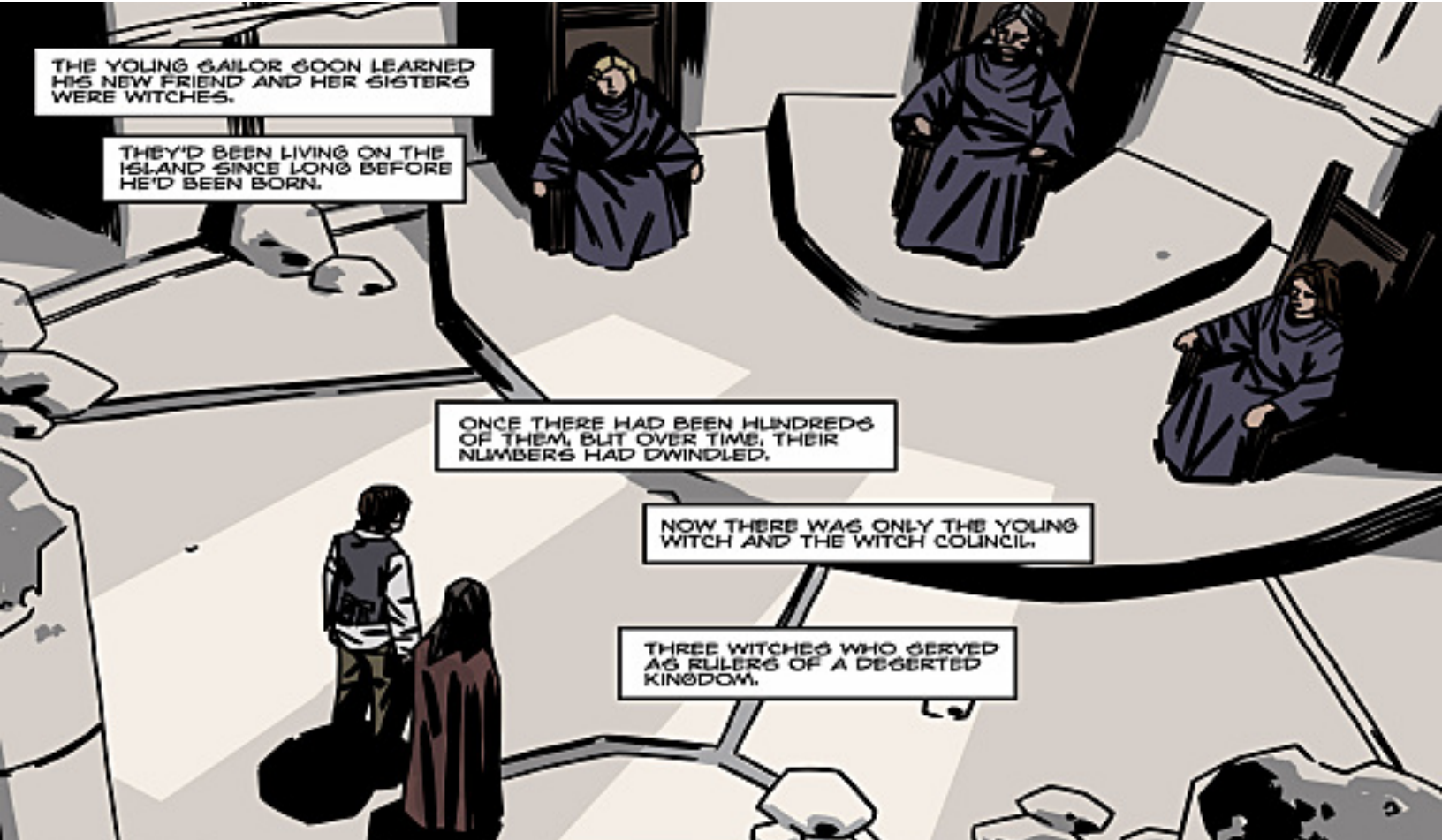
WITH HIS QUICKNESS TO  
EXAGGERATE AND EMBELLISH...

SHOULD FIND HIMSELF IN THE  
ONE PLACE ON ALL THE EARTH  
THAT TRULY NEEDED NEITHER  
TO DESCRIBE IT.

WHAT  
IS THIS  
PLACE  
?

THE  
ISLAND HAS  
BEEN KNOWN  
BY MANY NAMES  
OVER MANY  
YEARS...





THE YOUNG SAILOR SOON LEARNED HIS NEW FRIEND AND HER SISTERS WERE WITCHES.

THEY'D BEEN LIVING ON THE ISLAND SINCE LONG BEFORE HE'D BEEN BORN.

ONCE THERE HAD BEEN HUNDREDS OF THEM, BUT OVER TIME, THEIR NUMBERS HAD DWINDLED.

NOW THERE WAS ONLY THE YOUNG WITCH AND THE WITCH COUNCIL.

THREE WITCHES WHO SERVED AS RULERS OF A DESERTED KINGDOM.



THE YOUNG SAILOR TOLD THEM THE TALE OF HOW HE CAME TO THEIR ISLAND...

EXAGGERATING ONLY A LITTLE...



BUT IF HE'D BEEN EXPECTING THEM TO BE UPSET AT HIS INTRUSION, HE WAS DISAPPOINTED.



IF ANYTHING, THE WITCHES WERE OVERJOYED AT HIS ARRIVAL.

AND WHEN THEY TOLD HIM MORE ABOUT THE ISLAND, HE UNDERSTOOD WHY.

THE HEAD OF THE COUNCIL TOLD HIM  
OF THE ISLAND AS IT HAD BEEN IN THE  
OLDEN DAYS...

THE GLORIOUS SPIRES, THE BUSTLING  
STREETS, THE MANY WITCHES WHO  
CAME TO THE ISLAND SEEKING REFUGE  
FROM THE DARKNESS OF THE WORLD.

FOR HUNDREDS OF YEARS, THE  
ISLAND PROSPERED, BUT OVER TIME,  
THE WITCHES GREW TIRED, AND THEIR  
POWERS GREW WEAKER.

THE ISLAND NEEDED IMAGINATION TO EXIST,  
AND THEIRS HAD GROWN SLOW FROM TOO  
MANY CENTURIES OF LEISURE.

THE ISLAND WAS HUNGRY FOR NEW  
DREAMS, NEW STORIES, AND THE  
WITCHES WOULD REWARD THE ONE  
WHO PROVIDED THESE STORIES WITH  
THE MOST PRICELESS OF GIFTS...





AND THAT'S WHAT THE SAILOR DID.

STORY BY STORY.

STONE BY STONE.

HE CHANGED THE WORLD  
AROUND HIM.

THE TALE OF FINN'S MIDNIGHT RIDE  
WITH THE FAIRY KING?

THE FOUNDATION FOR A SPIRED  
CONFECTION THAT COULD ONE  
DAY REACH THE SUN ITSELF.

THE STORY OF A SAILOR'S MATE  
WHO FELL IN LOVE WITH A SELKIE  
AND GAVE UP HIS HUMANITY FOR  
A SET OF FINS ONLY TO FIND  
SHE'D GIVEN UP HER FINS FOR A  
FINE PAIR OF HUMAN LEGS?

AN AVENUE OF INTRICATE  
CONCENTRIC STONES NEARLY  
TOO BEAUTIFUL TO WALK ON.

IF THE CITY NEEDED IMAGINATION,  
THERE WAS NO FINER CHOICE THAN  
THE YOUNG SAILOR.

AND THE CITY RETURNED, EVEN  
GRANDER THAN BEFORE.



THE WITCHES WERE DELIGHTED,  
HARDLY BELIEVING THEIR LUCK.

AND THE SAILOR?

WELL—



OUR FRIEND WAS BEGINNING TO LEARN THAT HE'D TAKEN ON FAR MORE THAN SIMPLY RETURNING THE ISLAND TO ITS FORMER GLORY.

IF THE CITY'S BREAD AND BUTTER WAS IMAGINATION, HE WOULD HAVE TO KEEP ITS BELLY FULL.

AND HE DID HIS BEST.



SOON THE ISLAND WAS WELCOMING BACK MORE THAN JUST ITS BEAUTY.

THE WITCHES WERE RETURNING TO THE CITY, AND WITH THEM, THEY BROUGHT MORE DEMANDS FOR THE SAILOR'S BAG OF DREAMS AND TALL TALES.



EVEN HE, WHO HAD ONCE TOLD A NEW TALE EVERY NIGHT OF THE CROSSING FROM PLYMOUTH TO ITS NAMESAKE IN THE NEW WORLD, WAS BEGINNING TO RUN OUT OF STORIES.

TIME AND AGAIN, HE'D BEEN FORCED TO DIP INTO THE WELL OF PURE IMAGINATION...

AND THE WELL WAS BEGINNING  
TO RUN DRY.

LIKE THE CITY, STORIES REQUIRE  
A SUSTENANCE OF THEIR OWN.

FUEL FOR CREATION.

AND HE'D BEEN DEPRIVED  
OF THAT FUEL FOR FAR  
TOO LONG.

SOMETHING  
IS TROUBLING  
YOU, STORY-  
TELLER.

I  
NEED  
TO LEAVE  
THIS PLACE  
...

EXPERIENCE  
LIFE AGAIN  
...

FIND  
NEW  
STORIES  
TO TELL

BUT  
I DON'T  
KNOW  
HOW.

THERE  
IS A WAY,  
OF COURSE  
...

JUST  
TELL A  
STORY.

AND HE DID.

WHICH, WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM HIS FRIEND, IS HOW HE CAME TO BE STANDING ON A BEACH NEXT TO A WINGED HORSE.

LIKE THE WITCHES' CITY, IT HAD BEEN CREATED FROM THE FORCE OF HIS IMAGINATION, THE VERY THING HE NEEDED TO REPLENISH.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

SHE'S BEAUTIFUL.

SHE'LL GET YOU BACK TO THE MAINLAND, BUT DON'T FORGET ...

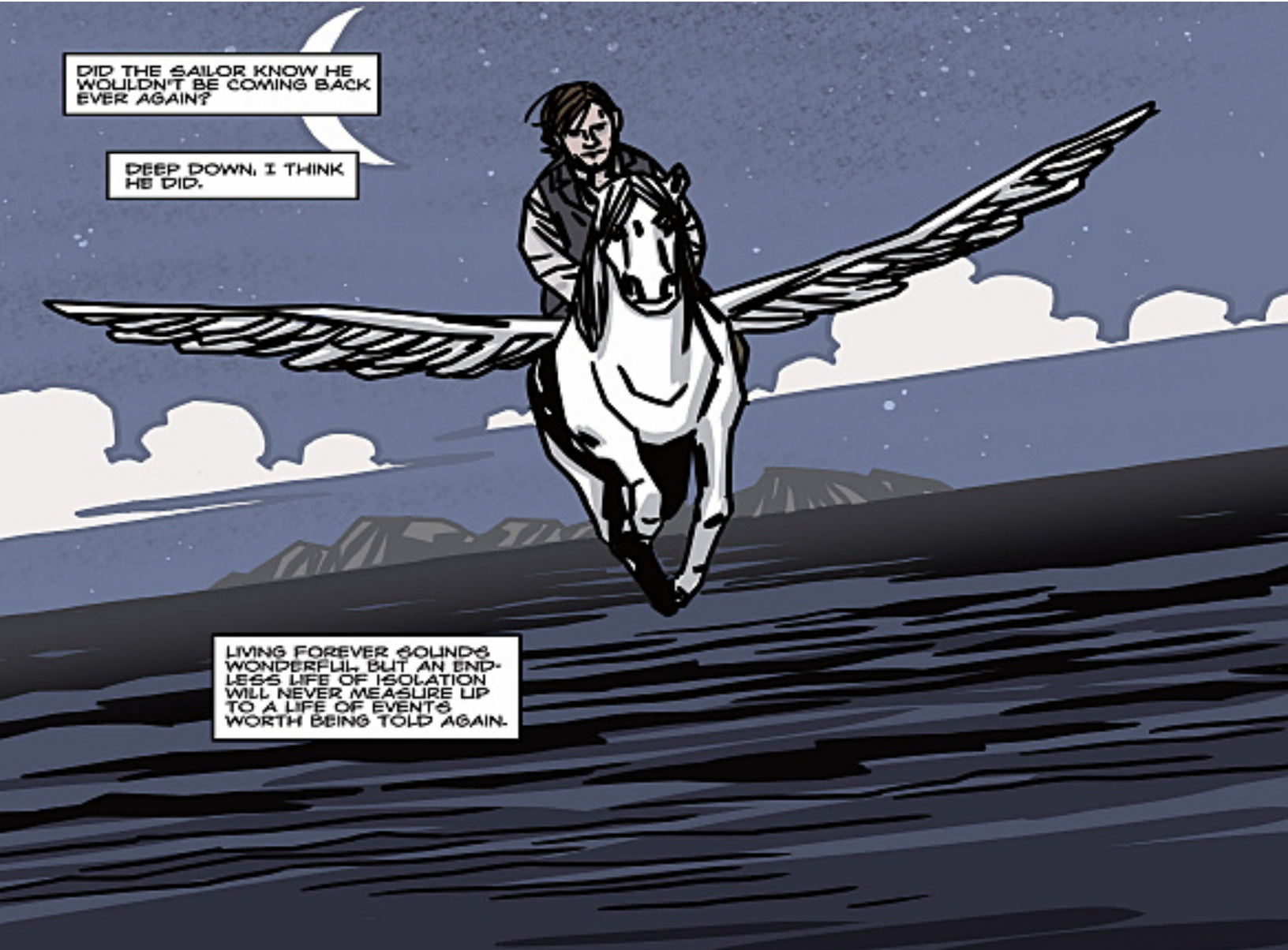
YOU'RE PART OF THE ISLAND NOW ...

IF YOU SET FOOT ON THE GROUND BACK HOME, YOU'LL FORFEIT THE GIFT WE'VE GIVEN YOU.

DON'T WORRY ...

I HAVEN'T BEEN HERE FOR LONG ...

"BUT I'LL BE BACK IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE."



DID THE SAILOR KNOW HE  
WOULDN'T BE COMING BACK  
EVER AGAIN?

DEEP DOWN, I THINK  
HE DID.

LIVING FOREVER SOUNDS  
WONDERFUL, BUT AN END-  
LESS LIFE OF ISOLATION  
WILL NEVER MEASURE UP  
TO A LIFE OF EVENTS  
WORTH BEING TOLD AGAIN.



STORIES COME FROM LIFE.

FROM LIVING.



AND THE SAILOR NEEDED  
TO LIVE AGAIN.



BUT WHEN THE SAILOR RETURNED  
TO THE VILLAGE HE CALLED HOME...

HE DISCOVERED HE'D LIVED FAR MORE  
LIFE THAN HE'D EVER IMAGINED.



SIX MONTHS ON THE ISLAND  
HAD BEEN HUNDREDS OF  
YEARS BACK HOME.

HIS FAMILY WAS GONE, HIS  
HOME WAS A CRUMBLING RUIN,  
HIS FRIENDS WERE LONG DEAD.



EVERYTHING HE'D KNOWN HAD  
DISAPPEARED IN THE TIME HE'D  
BEEN AWAY.

HE HAD NO LIFE  
TO RETURN TO.

AND IN THAT MOMENT, HE  
WAS TRULY LOST.



ONE TOUCH OF HIS FOOT ON  
THE SOIL OF HIS HOME...



AND HE WOULD LOSE HIS  
IMMORTALITY, AS WELL.



ALL THE YEARS HE'D BEEN  
AWAY WOULD RETURN TO  
HIS BODY.



ALL THAT REMAINED FOR HIM  
WAS ONE FINAL STORY.

ONE LAST TALE.



THE STORY OF WHO HE WAS  
AND WHERE HE'D BEEN.

THE WITCHES, THE ISLAND, THE  
MAGICAL WINGED HORSE...



IT WOULD BE THE  
GRANDEST STORY  
HE EVER TOLD.

ALL HE NEEDED WAS  
ONE LAST AUDIENCE.



AND WANDERING THE STREETS  
OF HIS VILLAGE...

EACH STEP ADDING DECADES  
TO HIS BODY...

HE FOUND IT.





"NEVER SAW HIM LEAVE."



I HOPE  
YOU'RE  
NOT HERE  
TO TAKE  
ME BACK.



TOO  
LATE FOR  
THAT, I  
THINK.

I TOLD  
YOU NOT  
TO TOUCH  
THE GROUND.





THERE'S  
NOTHING I  
CAN DO FOR  
YOU NOW.

I  
TOLD MY  
STORY.



THEN HE DIED.

RIGHT THERE ON THE HILLS  
OVERLOOKING THE TOWN  
WHERE HE'D BEEN BORN.



THE YOUNG WITCH GATHERED THE  
SAILOR'S REMAINS AND CARRIED  
HIM BACK TO THE ISLAND.



AND WHILE HE WAS GONE, HIS  
STORIES WOULD LIVE ON.



SOME  
PEOPLE THINK  
STORIES COME  
FROM THIN  
AIR, OLD  
FRIEND  
...

BUT EVEN  
THE MOST  
FANTASTIC  
STORY COMES  
FROM LIVING.

ALL IT  
TAKES IS  
SOMEONE  
TO LIVE  
THAT LIFE  
...



AND  
SOMEONE  
WHO WANTS  
TO HEAR  
ABOUT  
IT.



NOT TO  
MENTION A  
NICE FIRE FOR  
THEM TO SIT  
AROUND.

*A new tale spun next month...*



# ASILISSA THE BEAUTIFUL

BASED ON THE UNPRODUCED *THE STORYTELLER*  
TELEPLAY FROM THE JIM HENSON COMPANY ARCHIVES

*adapted and illustrated by* JEFF STOKELY



# ARCHAIA EDITORIAL

## NOVEMBER 2014

### SPOTLIGHT: ROCKET SALVAGE #1

Primo Rocket used to be the fastest speeder-racer in the galaxy, but after a crash that sealed the fate of his space-station-city home, Rio Rojo, Primo has resigned himself to life as a lowly spaceship salvage yard owner. However, his two "kids"—harvest clone Beta, and Beta's genius girl-clone Zeta—can't seem to keep out of trouble. When the dysfunctional family suddenly becomes the target of an intergalactic manhunt, the family has to come together to save their home. With blow-your-gamma-gasket action and true heart, this new series will make you want to pick up a wrench and strap in for the ride.

IF YOU LIKE THIS YOU'LL LIKE:

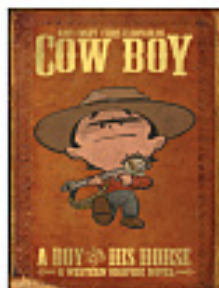
#### PANTALONES, TX VOL. 1 HC

From *Rocket Salvage* writer Yehudi Mercado (*Guardians of the Galaxy: The Universal Weapon*), this Saturday-morning cartoon throwback series follows the adventures of a band of misfit kids in a rural Texas town as they try to outwit, outrun, and outprank the ever-vigilant, taco-truck-riding sheriff and his giant chicken.



#### COW BOY VOL. 1 HC

Nate Cosby (*Pigs*, *Jim Henson's The Storyteller*) and Chris Eliopoulos (*Franklin Richards*, *Misery Loves Sherman*) team up for the Eisner Award-nominated *Cow Boy*, an all-ages story of a young bounty hunter determined to send his entire outlaw family to jail. He travels the Old West on a horse that ain't his, and won't stop 'til every one's his kin's in the clink.



## THIS MONTH FROM ARCHAIA



BUTTERFLY #3



JIM HENSON'S  
FRAGGLE ROCK: JOURNEY  
TO THE EVERSPRING #2



THE LAST BROADCAST #7



MOUSE GUARD:  
BALDWIN THE BRAVE  
AND OTHER TALES HC



JIM HENSON'S  
THE STORYTELLER:  
WITCHES #3



*the*  
**HANTOM ISLE**

*written and illustrated by* MATTHEW DOW SMITH

When a young man shipwrecks on a mysterious island ruled by a council of witches, he has the choice of freedom or staying on the isle where he does not age. The lure of immortality is hard to resist, but it comes with a price he may not be willing to pay.

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**THE STORYTELLER**  
*Tale Three of Five*  
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